(a) whether any research has been conducted to study to potential of obtaining medicines from seas;

(b) if so, the details thereof;

(c) whether any step has been taken to promote and market those medicines;

(d) if so, the details thereof; and

(e) if not, the reasons therefor?

THE MINISTER OF OCEAN DEVELOPMENT (DR. MURLI MANOHAR JOSHI): (a) and (b) Yes, Sir. A National Project on "Drugs from Sea" aiming to study the potential of marine organisms for extracting bioactive substances which can be used to develop drugs was initiated in 1991. More than 4000 samples from 1400 marine flora and fauna were collected and evaluated for their biological activity. Several of these samples were found to exhibit mild to strong therapeutic activities like antidiabetic, antidiarrhoels, antihyperlipidaemic, etc. from various fractions derived therefrom. The extracts from few organisms yielded the following promosing leades:

— Antidiabetic

— Antidiarrhoeal

— Antihyperlipidaemic

Rodent and monkey toxicity have been completed on the first two preparations and were found safe and ordent toxicity of the third preparation has been started in July 2001. A drug is developed after completion of pre-clinical trials, which takes about 8-12 years time.

(c) and (d) Commercialisation and industrial marketing is done after development is completed.

(e) Does not arise.

Rail projects in Iraq

5478. SHRI RUMANDLA RAMACHANDRAIAH: Will the Minister of RAILWAYS be pleased to state:

(a) whether Railways have signed a memorandum of understanding with the Iraq Government for 14 Rail Projects worth Rs. 1100 crore;

(b) if so, whether the project is subject to approval from the United Nations since Iraq faces US sanctions;

(c) whether these projects would be build up against exchange of crude oil;

(d) if so, by when final decision in this regard is likely to be taken; and

(e) how many projects, out of 14 would be implemented during the current year?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF RAILWAYS (SHRI O. RAJAGOPAL): (a) Yes, Sir. As Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) has been signed with Government of Iraq covering various aspects of cooperation in railway sector such as new railway projects, sky bus metro, sleeper factory, exchange of expertise & training, supply of services, materials and equipments, etc. through Konkan Railway Corporation. However, there is no mention of project cost.

(b) The matter has been referred to Ministry of External Affairs to take up this issue with UN, if considered appropriate.

(c) The financing mechanism has not been stated in the MoU.

(d) It would depend upon the detailed contract agreement and specific proposals from Government of Iraq.

(e) Does not arise in view of (c) & (d) above.

Suicide attempts on Kolkata metro track

5479. DR. C. NARAYANA REDDY: Will the Minister of RAILWAYS be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that the number of suicide attempts is on the increase on Kolkata Metro-High Volt rail track;

(b) whether it is also a fact that besides, legal implications, the incidents are causing much inconvenience to the Metro rail users; and

(c) if so, what steps Government are taking to coordinate the relative role of the Police and Railways?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF RAILWAYS (SHRI O. RAJAGOPAL): (a) Yes, Sir.